## 20. THE GIANT MAHSEERS OF KUMAUN HIMALAYAS WITH A RECENT RARE RECORD

The mahseers of Kumaun Himalayas, either from lentic or lotic waters, are famous throughout the world. They not only provide good sport for the angler but are also good to eat. Records of the largest mahseers caught in Kumaun and other waters of the Himalayas are many in the past, but few recent records are available.

Hamilton (1822) found a 271 cm (9 ft) mahseer in his collctions from India; Thomas (1893) reported 18 to 25 kg mahseers as common in India without any reference to Kumaun Himalayas; Corbett [1923, 1937, in his observations sent to B. S. Raj (1945) in mahseer symposium] records mahseers of approximately 27.00 kg from Malwa tal, a 22.50 kg from Naini tal and one of 13.50 kg from Bhim tal. Hora (1939, 1940, 1951) made observations on the natural history and identification of different mahseer species, with the largest size upto 60 cm (2 ft) from his all-India collections. Raj (1945) reported that Mr. Langdale Smith reared a 13.50 kg mahseer in his pond at Bhowali near Naini tal. McDonald (1939) reported his largest mahseer of 12.75 kg from Himalayan rivers. The size and population of mahseers of Kumaun have been going down in recent years, and no recent record of giant mahseer is available. However, I was able to record the largest recent catch of an 18.50 kg female mahseer (*Tor putitora*) by rod and line in the early morning (at 6.10 a.m. on 8th August, 1977) from Bhimtal lake of Kumaun Himalayas. The bait used was a 0.2 kg Jabua (*Barilius bendelisis*). This mahseer was caught in the inshore region from the lake bank in breeding season when the fish migrates to shallow spawning sites in Bhimtal lake. They also come inshore to feed even in spawning season (Pathani 1979). Thus the large female mahseer may have come to the shallow region for spawning and littoral feeding and was caught by rod and line at dawn.

The fish exhibited swollen abdomen and female secondary sexual characters (as already recorded by Pathani 1978). The various body measurements taken are as follows:

Total length, 126.00 cm; caudal fork length, 117.00 cm; standard length, 110.00 cm; body length, 78.30 cm; head length, 31.70 cm; eye diameter, 3.10 cm; body depth, 31.00 cm; depth at caudal region, 11.00 cm; length of dorsal spine, 16.00 cm; length of pectoral fins, 16.00 cm; length of pelvic fins, 14.00 cm; length of anal fin, 9.40 cm; and length of caudal fin, 16.00 cm.

The weight of the fish with viscera was 18.50 kg. The age of the fish determined by me by scale method was 12 ± years.

Autopsy of the fish was done and length and weight of ripe ovary was recorded, its total length being 35.5 cm and weight being 1.5 kg. The ovarian eggs were interspersed in four sizes confirming the observations of Pathani (1979). The largest mature egg diameter ranged from 3.0 to 3.2 mm and the smallest egg diameter ranged from 0.66 to 0.74 mm. The total fecundity estimated was 3,56,500. The length of alimentary tract was 246 cm and length of intestinal bulb was 40 cm.

The present rare record of an 18.50 kg. mahseer is the first such record in the last four decades, and is higher than the last record of 13.50 kg from Bhimtal by Jim Corbett. The present find also demonstrates the

rarity of giant sized mahseers in Kumaun waters.

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## 21. MALE IN COPULATION WITH DEAD FEMALE OF *HIEROGLYPHUS NIGROREPLETUS* BOL.

Uvarov (1928) described abnormal pairing among locusts. He mentioned that many males copulate with dead females. Husain and Mathur (1945) stated that pairing of male with dead female locust is a physical impossibility. Bhatia (1959) observed eight instances of mature males of Desert Locust, *Schistocerca gregaria* Forsk. copulating with females which had died the previous night. Katiyar (1962) observed males of *Aularches punctatus* Drury and *Parahieroglyphus bilineatus* Bol., to ride and copulate with dead females. He also observed a few females of *P. bilineatus* in coitus with dead males.

During the normal course of breeding of *Hieroglyphus nigrorepletus* Bol. males were noticed to continue copulation even after the death of female. This appears to be the first report of such phenomenon in *H. nigrorepletus.*

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